WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND EMPOWERMENT: A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS OF AGRA

A
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Under the Supervision of:

Dr. Bandana Gaur
Associate professor
Department of Sociology
Faculty of Social Sciences, DEI

Submitted by:

Anshika Pandey
Research Scholar

Prof. Poornima Jain

Head
Department of Sociology,
Faculty of Social Sciences
Dayalbagh Educational Institute,
Dayalbagh, Agra

Prof. Sanjeev Swami

Dean
Faculty of Social Sciences
Dayalbagh Educational Institute,
Dayalbagh, Agra

Department of Sociology and political science,
Faculty of Social Sciences,
Dayalbagh Educational Institute (Deemed University)
Dayalbagh Agra- 282005

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INTRODUCTION:

The word empowerment is widely used in the relation to women. Very often it is used as a substitute for women's welfare, development of women, upliftment of women, participation and awareness rising of women. But the empowerment of women is not synonymous to these words. It is something of a more and broader concept.

Empowerment in simplest form means "the manifestation of redistribution of power that challenges patriarchal ideology and the male dominance". Empowerment is a process that enables women to gain access to and control of material as well as information resources. Empowerment is a process, not an event, which challenges traditional power equations and relations. Abolition of gender-based discrimination in all institutions and structures of the society and participation of women in policy and decision making process are few dimensions of women empowerment.

Empowerment in the context of women's development is a way of defining, challenging and overcoming barriers in a woman's life through which she increases her ability to shape her life and environment. It is an active, multidimensional process which should enable women to realize their full identity and power in all spheres of life.

Empowerment can give power to women to have control over the circumstances of their lives. It includes both control over resources and ideology, greater self-confidence and an inner transformation of one's consciousness that enables one to overcome external affairs. Empowerment of women is critical not only for their own welfare but also for the development of the country.

The concept of **entrepreneurship is proving to be a helpful instrument for the empowerment of women**. Entrepreneurship development and income generating

activities are a feasible solution for empowering women. It generates income and also provides flexible working hours according to the needs of home makers. Economic independence is the need of the hour. Participation in income generating activities helps in the overall empowerment of women. Empowering women through education, ideas, consciousness, mobilization and participatory approach can enable them to take their own decisions, make them self-reliant and self-confident.

The traditional perception of women as helper in the occupation of the husband and homemaker is gradually vanishing in the recent past. Women have started proving themselves in many fields including entrepreneurship and their participation in entrepreneurial activities has increased by leap and bound. Quite a large number of women entrepreneurs have setup their enterprises and have been in business successfully. They have been successful in breaking their confinement within the limits of their homes by entering into varied kinds of professions and services. Women entrepreneurs have proved to be on par with their male counterparts in business acumen and are emerging as smart and dynamic entrepreneurs.

The acceptance of small family concept and the resultant disintegration of traditional joint family system have resulted in psychological liberation experienced by women. The successive industrial policies of the government have laid greater emphasis on the development of the women entrepreneurship in the country. Improved level of women education has increased the aspiration to widen their horizon and extend their role. More women now opt for higher technical and professional education as the educational facilities increase in the country. Proportion of women in the labour force has also increased as a result of this. All these factors and developments have influenced women to take-up non-traditional higher levels of activities like that of entrepreneurship apart from their conventional role of home making.

Concept of Women Entrepreneurship:

Women entrepreneurship is relatively a recent phenomenon which came into prominence in late the 1970's. There has been dramatic increase in the number of women setting-up in business and it has been noted that they have become the fastest growing segment with in the small business sector (Moore and Buttner 1997). Due to spread of education, favorable government policies toward women, entrepreneurship awareness and new kind of avenue, more and more women are venturing as entrepreneurs in all kind of business, economic and other useful activities.

Women entrepreneurship in India has come a long way from papads and pickles to engineering and electronics. Nowadays elite women in cities are making a mark in non-conventional fields such as consultancy, garments exporting, interior designing, textile printing, food processing, chemicals, pharmaceuticals etc.

Women entrepreneurs are the women or a group of the women who initiate, organize and operate business enterprise. The government of India has defined women entrepreneur as "an enterprise owned and controlled by women having a minimum financial interest of 51 per cent of capital and giving at least 51 per cent of the employment generated by the enterprise of women".

In the words of nutshell "women entrepreneurs are those women who think of business enterprise, initiate it, organize and combine the factors of production, operate the enterprise and undertake risk and handle economic uncertainty involved in running a business enterprise"

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Women's Empowerment:

Hemlatha H.M. (2004) explained that Empowerment is a process focused on the capacity building of women to initiate, sustain and own the development by the women. In this process women are enable to have access, participate and control decision of various aspects/activities of welfare as well as development programmes. The author also described the issues in the process of women's empowerment and the multi-dimensional approaches for the women's empowerment. Those are helpful in the enhancement of economic, political, social and psychological capabilities of the women for the sustainable development.

Kumari Sumitra (2006) stated that women empowerment is a comprehensive and much debated issue and it is a dynamic, multi-dimensional process, which intends to enable women to realize their full power and potential in all spheres of life. Writer discussed that help women to attain economic independence is the first priority for such a change. When a woman attains economic independence she naturally becomes the mistress of her own body and author of her own decisions. The empowering of women is a necessary sustainable development of community. In the case of women equality, social justice and freedom have dynamic roles to achieve such sustainability.

Biju M.R. (2006) has been discussed the concept of empowerment. The author critically examined the international initiatives for women empowerment and Indian initiatives for the empowerment of women. In the concluding part author briefly descried that Women themselves have become keenly aware of their rights and are spearheading movements across the country against all sorts of social evils. This consciousness is largely due to an increase in women's literacy although they have miles and miles to go. The author also stated that the most significant landmark in the journey is the historic 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts reserved one-third seats for women in the Panchayati Raj and Municipal bodies.

Bhuyan Dasarathi (2006) explained the concept of women empowerment. The author critically examined the great divergence between the constitutional position of the women and stark reality of deprivation and degradation women. The author also discussed the challenges of women empowerment and steps which can be taken for the development of women. She concluded that there has been a marked change in the condition of women but many of its benefits however have yet to touch the majority. The most important measure of their success should be the extent to which they enable woman to interpret, apply and enforce laws of their own making, incorporating their own voices, values and concerns.

Obstacles to Women Entrepreneurship:

Singal Savita and Srinivasan Kamala (1989) made an exploratory study of the constraints, felt needs and preferences of rural women in economic development. The study was conducted in a village of Hisar district of Haryana. Multi-design random sampling design was used for the selection of respondents. The findings revealed that lack of money as the major constraint was reported by majority of respondents. The overall picture that emerged was that women lack most of the essential resources in the form of human as well as material resources to take up income generating activity, independently.

Vijyalakshmi.T. (2007) analyzed the factors that encourage women to become entrepreneurs. She also examine cross-country comparison between U.S.A and India and found the increasing percentage of self employed women in U.S.A but the development of women entrepreneurs is expectedly low in our country. She identified the problems faced by women entrepreneurs and the steps to promote women entrepreneurs in India. She concluded that by enabling women to become entrepreneurs and participate fully and more effectively in wider range of economic activities, it is possible not only to improve their position in society but also to make greater progress toward overall economic and social development objectives, improved distribution of income, reduction in poverty and reduction of unemployment.

Das Marami (2012) has conducted a case study of Guwahati Municipal Corporation. The objectives of the study were to understand the impact of economic status of women entrepreneurs, examine the attitude of family and society towards women entrepreneurs, and identify the problems faced by the women entrepreneurs and measures for promotion of women entrepreneurs. The data was obtained through questionnaire and interview schedule. The study was conducted on 50 women respondents. The author concluded that majority of women started their enterprise at the age range of 25 – 45. They had qualification and perhaps could get some other job. But they selected entrepreneurship as career. This reflects the changing attitude of women entrepreneurship. Women entrepreneurs considered entrepreneurship as secondary to their home and family. They gave maximum importance to their husband and children and their relationship with them. Women entrepreneurs reported that finance was a major problem and marketing was the next problem faced by them.

Factors that Motivate Women Entrepreneurs:

Singh and Sengupta (1985) conducted a study on 45 women who were attending the entrepreneurial development programme held at Delhi in 1983 organized by NIESBUD, FICCI and few other agencies. The objectives of the study were to determine the characteristics of women who were threshold starting their business, motivating factors and factors that promoted women to start their own business. The data was obtained through the questionnaire and in-depth interview. The author concluded that the profile of women entrepreneurs was not dominated by either educated or lack of it or any other characteristics. The women who were more educationally qualified perceived entrepreneurship as a challenge, ambition fulfillment and for doing something fruitful, whereas less educationally qualified entrepreneurs perceived it as only tool for earning money quickly. Majority of the potential entrepreneurs had clarity about their project but needed moral support from men and other family members for setting up their enterprises. Women entrepreneurs prefer to combine their need for excellence with emotional dependency. They had an inner uncertainty of their own capabilities and needed a male support to pave their way either with money, business know-how or moral support.

Shah (1987) conducted a study on 300 women who undertook an entrepreneurship development programme (EDP) organized by NISBUD at Delhi, with the purpose of drawing a demographic profile of different target groups of women entrepreneurs, to find out their motivations and their behavioral patterns. The entrepreneurs were assessed by the Thematic Apperception Test, "who am-I" essay and personal interview. The author concluded that the distinctive features of women entrepreneurs were need for achievement, self-sufficiency in term of internal and external resource awareness, initiative taking, problem solving and risk taking. Among the motives to become an entrepreneur were economic needs, utilization of own experience and education, husband's/ family's support and interest, availability of free time and finance, desire to be independent, and personal ego and satisfaction of doing something on one's own.

Ganesan.S. (2003) discussed the empirical factors which motivate women to enter into entrepreneurship and the factors which influence them to become successful. The author introduced the concept of surrogate entrepreneurs and false entrepreneurship in his study. Many social, economic and family factors have been identified and analyzed with the help of meticulously collected primary data. The author concluded that the data available on the number of women entrepreneurs is totally wrong. It has been proved that most of the women entrepreneurs in the official list are not either women or entrepreneurs.

Support For Women Entrepreneurs:

Sugna B and Sandhya Rani G, (2007) conducted a study in a voluntary organization i.e. RASS (Rayalaseema Seva Samithi) in the region of Andhra Pradesh which promote thrift among women. The objectives of the study were to examine the functioning of Self Help Groups, role of Self Help Groups in social, Economic and political empowerment of women and the future plans of women with regard to their savings. The findings of the study revealed that the women were very active in participating in group activities, they save money from their earning through SHGs, utilize their savings when in urgent need and they took loan from the group fund for the purpose of cultivating, petty shops, tailoring etc. as far as the role of SHGs in empowerment of women is concern, women have improved their economic status, team spirit has developed, social mobility and free movement within and outside the

village increased and interaction with government officials and started questioning the government agencies to get their rights has increased.

Vijya.M. (2007) made an attempt to study the problems of the rural women entrepreneurs in details and steps to be taken to improve their well-being in term of the programmes and policies initiated by the government and concluded that the growth of women entrepreneurship has socio-economic significance in a country like India where economic participation has been low. By opening a large number of small industrial ventures, women entrepreneurs can strengthen the industrial base, provide employment opportunities and achieve balance regional growth. Thus this emerging economic force of women entrepreneurs can contribute a lot to industrial development of the country.

Nayak Sekhar Sudhansu and panigrahy Lochan Rajib and Sahu Anil Kumar (2010) made an empirical study in southern districts of Orissa viz. Ganjam, Gajapati, Koraput, Malkangiri, Nawarangapur, Rayagada, Boudh and Kandhamal. The scope of the study was made limited only to the entrepreneurs who have taken loan under the self-employment schemes of the Government i.e. PMRY. The study has covered a period of 11 years from 1993-94 to 2003-04 is taken into consideration. The study was based on primary as well as secondary data. 1200 samples have been taken by using random sampling method selecting 150 samples from each district by questionnaire. The study revealed that the Government has taken special care for the sustainable development of women entrepreneurs under PMRY scheme in comparison to men entrepreneurs.

Mishra Simanchal and Mahaprasasta Jogashankar (2010) examined the stage of entrepreneurship among women in the Kalahandi district of Orissa. The author is discussed the employment scope of women and their participation, problems of work participation and steps for the improvement of the employment status of women in the District. The study revealed that women are mostly engaged in semi-skilled or unskilled jobs, there is no equal treatment of women as men till date and the education status is less than that of men folk. In the concluding part the authors suggested that economic independence and education of women will go a long way in attaining self-reliance for women. For this they have to have experience, awareness, education, competence, willingness, confidence, self-motivation and encouraging etc.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

Women constitute around half of the Indian population. They are therefore, regarded as the better half of the society. In the official proclamation they are at per with men. But in real life the truth prevails otherwise. Our society, particularly rural society is still male dominated and women are not treated as equal partners both inside and outside four wall of the house. In India marriage is the career for most women. Even professionally they have confined their activities to some areas like teaching, office work, nursing and medicine. It is rarely; they enter professions like engineering and business. The area of women entrepreneurship is considered to be under developed. This is due in the part of the fact that entrepreneurship is regarded to be male activity. The women work force constitutes only 28 per cent of the female population. Out of total number of self-employed persons, women account only 5 per cent. The majority of self employed women are engaged in the unorganized sectors like agriculture, handicraft, handlooms and cottage based industries (according to National Sample Survey Organization).

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:

Now a days' women entrepreneurship become an important tool for women empowerment. Women Entrepreneurship and Empowerment, A study of Urban and Rural women Entrepreneurs in Agra district is relatively a new phenomenon, no study have been conducted on this topic. This study is significant because women in Agra city are empowering through entrepreneurial activities. Large numbers of women entrepreneurs have set up their enterprises and have been in business successfully. This current study will also contribute to the growing body of literature on female entrepreneurship, an area that considered to be under developed. Also it is to the best of the researcher's knowledge.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. To understand the relation between women entrepreneurship and women empowerment.
2. To examine the problems and challenges women entrepreneurs face in managing their businesses.
3. To study the factors that encourage women to start their own enterprises.
4. To compare the degree of empowerment among high, middle and low levels of women entrepreneurs.
5. To study the role of government and non- governmental organizations for strengthening women entrepreneurs.

HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY:

1. There is a positive relation between women entrepreneurship and women empowerment.
2. Financial constraint, marketing problem, family ties and lack of education is the major problems and challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in managing their businesses.
3. Economic needs, family responsibilities and desire to be independent are the major factors that encourage women to start their own enterprises.
4. High level women entrepreneurs are more empowered than middle and low level entrepreneurs.
5. Governmental and non-governmental organizations help women entrepreneurs by providing them trainings and giving them financial and marketing assistance.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The study is to be conducted in **Agra District**. The target group of the study is women who have been running their own enterprises in rural and urban areas of Agra District for minimum of three years and carrying out businesses like; Beauty Parlour, Tailoring, Food Processing, Grocery/Vegetable Shops, Bag and Soft Toys making etc. Data for the proposed research will be collected from primary sources as well as secondary sources. Interview schedule will be designed and observation technique will be used for collection of primary data. Secondary sources will include books, journals, e-libraries, newspapers and magazines. Descriptive research designs will be used for the study.

The primary data collection would generally being based on the classification of different areas of urban and rural population of Agra district. There are fifteen blocks in Agra District of Uttar Pradesh namely, Achanera, Akola, Bah, Barauli Ahir, Bichpuri, Etmadpur, Fatehabad, Fathepur Sikri, Jagner, Jaitpur Kalan, Khandauli, Kheragarh, Pinahat, Saiyan, Shamsabad. Ten blocks will randomly be selected out of 15 blocks. The list of major localities of Agra city has been prepared from which ten areas will randomly be selected. The proposed sample size of the population would be 345 women entrepreneurs. The pilot study will be conducted on 35 to 40 women Entrepreneurs collectively from rural and urban areas in order to refine the data collection process, mainly the content of data and procedures to be followed. The study will also include the case studies of some of the women entrepreneurs.

Convenient sampling technique and snowball sampling technique will be used to identify the women entrepreneurs who are running their own businesses in rural and urban areas of the district.

Statistical analysis and data presentation:

The collected data will be tabulated and analyzed in pie charts and bar diagrams. And the further calculation can be done by using suitable statistical techniques like chi square, correlation, ANOVA. Analysis will be done by using SPSS.

TENTATIVE CHAPTERIZATION:

CHAPTER I

Introduction

- Context of the Study
- Conceptual and Theoretical Clarification
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CHAPTER II

- Relation between women entrepreneurship and women empowerment.

CHAPTER III

- Problems and challenges women entrepreneurs face in managing their businesses.

CHAPTER IV

- Factors that encourage women to start their own enterprises.

CHAPTER V

- Compare the degree of empowerment among high, middle and low levels of women entrepreneurs.

CHAPTER VI

- Role of Government and non-governmental organizations for strengthening women entrepreneurs.

CHAPTER VII

- Summary and Conclusion
- Bibliography

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